Air transport: creation of the Single European Sky

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In an information memo, the Commission presented an intermediate report on the work carried out by the High Level Group chaired by Ms Loyola de Palacio, Commissioner in charge of Transport. The discussions held until now in the Working group "Industrial and Social Questions" showed a growing consensus relating to the main issues which follow: - in order to promote security, improve efficiency and guarantee the continuation of these aviation transport activites, it is necessary to reform air traffic management in Europe and create both a strong regulator and regulation/legislation which is consistent across Europe and which establishes specific rules concerning security, economic conditions of service providers and the definition of the usage of air space; - the regulation must be coherent throughout Europe. Firstly, this implies defining high level rules in a unifrom manner for all the Member States. It is also necessary to provide a mechanism which would guarantee an effective application in Europe, not only by the Member States but also by the service providers and the users; - air space must be treated as a common resource, without internal frontiers. Below this pan-European air space there shall be a national structure responding to local needs (local constraints, access to airports, military demands) but at the same time compatible with the pan-European concept and plan; - the opening-up of a single European sky could be organised in stages, which would allow the implementation of a more integrated management system, starting with superior air space (above a certain altitude) and progressing by stages in order to reach the set objective; - for all users - commercial aviation, general aviation and the armed forces - they must have access to superior air space. Furthermore, no zone shall be permanently reserved for a category of users whoever they may be. Rules should be taken into account of the features of the use of military air space. The civil and military users are willing to improve the agreements relating to the co-ordination of air space usage and establishing arbitration procedures; - the commitment and the active involvement of air traffic controllers is the key to the success of the reform. The regulatory authorities and the Member States should improve the recrutement efforts and invest more in the quality of staff by providing training in order to make the profession more attractive; - it is necessary to encourage and if necessary, oblige the service providers, the airports and the users of air space to use equipment of which interoperability is guaranteed, to use new technologies and develop co-operation in such a way as to optimise the performances of the system. The High level Group report shall supply specifications on these orientations and shall formulate recommendations to organise a new framework. The Community framework could supply efficient instruments to regulate this sector. The Commission will continue to work with the Member Staterepresentatives and also with the social and industrial partners in order to finalise the report before October 2000 and thereafter present proposals as quickly as possible.